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A COPY OF A LETTER SENT TO THE Rev^d. Mr. K***. CONCERNING *REPENTANCE.*

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COPY

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LETTER, &c.

Reverend SIR, *Monday, March* 30, 1752.

AS you were pleaſed yeſterday, in the ſermon you read, to make your remarks on a letter I was concerned in publiſhing ſome years ago, I hope you will excuſe the liberty I take in writing freely to you on the ſubject. Your obſervation was, I think, to this purpoſe, that, " to tell thoſe guilty of notorious crimes, " to be aſſured of ſalvation, by a truſt and dependance " on Jeſus Chriſt, unleſs their repentance was propor- " tion'd to their crimes, was dreadful and ſhocking." The truth is, Matthew Henderſon, to whom this letter was wrote, was a perſon endowed with as great a degree of repentance, on the account of his crime, as could poſſibly be, where there is no ſenſe of pardon and forgiveneſs firſt, and ſo was a true penitent in your ſenſe of the word, and was crying out, What muſt I do to be ſaved! This was known to R. F. who wrote the letter to him; and, it is true, he does not direct him to make that repentance the ground of his pardon, but

directs him, under a ſenſe of his ſin and guiltineſs, to look to Jeſus Chriſt, as a refuge and remedy, provided in the rich mercy of God, for the worſt and chiefeſt of ſinners, that by virtue of *union* with him, they might not only partake of *peace* and *pardon*, but alſo of a *true ſpirit of holineſs*; not only of the *privileges*, but of the *diſpoſitions* of ſaints; not only of a *title* to heaven, but of a *meetneſs* alſo.

The reaſon why he was not directed to ground his pardon upon his penitence, was, in the firſt place, becauſe every man, if he obtains pardon only in proportion to his repentance, muſt inevitably be damn'd; but God has, in his word, laid a better foundation, even *the precious blood of Chriſt, as of a lamb without blemiſh and without ſpot, in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveneſs of ſin*, Eph. i 7. Again, it is ſaid, *Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveneſs of ſins, and by him all that believe are juſtified, &c.* Acts xiii. 38, 39. And again, *To him give all the prophets witneſs, that in his name, whoſoever believeth, ſhall receive remiſſion of ſins*, Acts x. 43.

A ſecond reaſon why he was not directed to ground his pardon upon his repentance, was, becauſe, though in the divine method of grace,

" *None will come, till conſcious of their want,*
" *Yet right to come, they have by ſovereign grant;*
" *Such right to Chriſt, his promiſe, and his grace,*
" *That all are damn'd that hear and don't embrace.*"

ERSK. Goſpel Sonnets, page 54.

And

And as there can be no ſinner ſo great, as that the grace of Chriſt is not ſufficient for him, ſo there can be none ſo great, but that, by virtue of the deed of gift and grant which God has made of his ſon to loſt ſinners of mankind, they are welcome, and have a right to appropriate Chriſt as their remedy; ſuch right, as neither the drunkenneſs of the drunkard, or the murther of the murtherer, can make void, but it ſtands to their condemnation, as much as their drunkenneſs or murther, that having heard this goſpel, they neglect ſo great ſalvation. I am not a ſaying, therefore, that if I ſee a man drunk, or committing murther, that I would caſt pearls before ſwine, and not obſerve an order and method in declaring theſe truths, that they may be uſeful, and therefore would endeavour to convince him of his ſinful loſt condition, that he may *deſire* to be delivered, and then declare what a Saviour Chriſt is, and what a right he has to him, by the free grant in the word, that he may have an *appetite* to the great ſalvation, and *embrace it as his own accordingly*. Obſerving this as a rule, that though a *ſenſe* of a ſinful loſt eſtate is neceſſary *to move us to take Chriſt*, and not be careleſs about this important affair; yet it is not at all neceſſary *to give us any right*, or *warrant*, to take him. Matthew Henderſon was crying out, What ſhall I do to be ſaved! from a ſenſe of his ſin and miſery, and therefore the proper anſwer to him was, Believe on the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and thou ſhalt be ſaved. Many poor ſouls ſeem deſirous of the ſalvation of Chriſt, but not knowing how welcome they are, or what right they have, are afraid of preſumption, and ſo are kept back from embracing Chriſt, as a ſaviour to them, and conſequently from true faith or holineſs: others, that are enemies

to God, may alſo, by the working of his ſpirit, be won over, through a gracious declaration of what a right he has given them to Chriſt.

" *So freely is the unbounded call diſpens'd,*
" *We find therein even ſinners unconvinc'd,*
" *Who know not they are naked, blind, and poor,*
" *Counſell'd to beg, or buy, at Jeſus' door,*
" *And take the glorious robe, eye-ſalve, and golden*
" *ſtore.*" Goſpel Sonnets, p. 54.

A third reaſon why he was not directed to ground his pardon upon his repentance, was, becauſe goſpel repentance is the fruit and effect of pardon, and not the ground and foundation of it. This is evident from the ſcriptures and experience, is alſo the ſound doctrine of the Church of England, and of the reverend aſſembly of divines in their Catechiſm.

1. It is ſcriptural, as appears from conſidering, 1ſt, that there can be no true goſpel repentance without love to God. Repentance muſt be heart-work, and there can be no true love without a ſenſe of pardon and forgiveneſs. Mary *lov'd much, becauſe ſhe was forgiven much*, Luke vii. 47. and John ſays, *We love him, becauſe he firſt lov'd us*, 1 John iv. 19.

2. True goſpel repentance muſt ariſe from a filial fear of God, and not from a panic tormenting horror, like the damn'd in hell, and the Pſalmiſt ſays, *Pſalm* cxxx. 4. *There is forgiveneſs with thee that thou mayſt be feared.*

3. True

3. True repentance muſt have a ſpirit of true obedience as eſſential to it. Now Chriſt is come, as Zacharias ſays, *Luke* i. 77. *to give the knowledge of ſalvation by the remiſſion of ſins, that we being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, might ſerve him in holineſs, and righteouſneſs, without fear*, i. e. without a ſlaviſh fear of hell.

It is true, the word repent is uſed in various ſenſes in the ſcriptures, and we muſt aſſertain the meaning of any particular uſage of the word from the context and circumſtances; ſometimes it means no more than what *Ahab*, *Saul*, and *Judas* were poſſeſſed of; but is ſuch repentance as this any where made a foundation to apply pardon and eternal ſalvation upon? Can a man ground his hopes of eternal life on a repentance common with reprobates?—— The New Teſtament frequently, when it expreſſes repentance, includes in it, a turning from all thoughts and attempts to be ſaved by any acts and deeds of ours, though aſſiſted by the ſpirit of God; a turning from all thoughts and attempts to be ſaved by any other way than Chriſt; and it is to ſuch good men as were of a contrary mind, that our Lord ſays, *Except ye repent, ye ſhall all likewiſe periſh*, Luke xiii. 3. It is to ſuch that John the Baptiſt ſays, *Oh, generation of vipers!* Luke iii. 7. *bring forth fruit meet for repentance*, Luke iii. 7, 8. that is, *confeſs your ſins*, Matt. iii. 6. *and be baptiſed for the remiſſion of them, in the faith of him that is ſhortly to come*, Acts xix. 4. *and think not to add ſomething to your intrinſic value by this ordinance*; ſo alſo the words *repent* and *believe* the goſpel, *Mark* i. 15. *repent and be baptized*

every

every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of your sins, Acts ii. 38. are necessarily to be understood, a turning from other thoughts and methods of salvation to *Christ alone*; and where it is said, *Christ is exalted to give repentance to Israel*, and *remission of sins*, Acts v. 31. we must necessarily allow of a *coming* to, or *believing* on Christ, in order to have a *true repentance*; and according to the order and method of God's grace in Christ, the repentance, when it means *a turning of the heart from sin to God*, is to be looked upon as the *end*, and remission of sins by Christ as the *means* to that end, by causing us to love him, from a sense of the pardoning love to us, as above-mentioned. When his apostles preached their sermons to a promiscuous multitude, they did not tell them, "they must have pro-"portional repentance as the ground of it," but they boldly declared remission of sins to every soul without difference, that believed in his name, not doubting, but that the same spirit that effectually wrought in them to submit gladly to, or accept of Christ, as the Lord their righteousness, would also cause them, from a spirit of love, to repent truly of all their former courses.

Experience also confirms this doctrine of repentance, as *the fruit* of remission of sins through faith in Christ, and proves that this doctrine has a *rational*, as well as a *scriptural* foundation. It is such a point of common experience, *that love begets love*, that it has passed into a proverb, and the method one man takes to gain the affections of another, is, by manifesting love for that purpose; so God says, not only give me thy heart, but *draws us with cords of love*, as with the proper

bands

bands with which *a man is to be drawn*, Hoſea xi. 14. And as to ſpiritual experience, all without exception that have believed on *Chriſt*, to the *perſuaſion* and *aſſurance* of the pardon of their ſins by his blood, have found it *a moſt effectual* principle of repentance, as above-mentioned, and as impoſſible to ſubſiſt without it, and a true ſpirit of holineſs, as it is impoſſible for the ſun to exiſt without its light and heat. But, as this is a kind of faith that you are ſo far from having experienced that you ſpeak againſt it, ſo I cannot expect, unleſs it pleaſe God to change your mind, that you can be an experimental judge of its effects and influence, in regard to repentance. Only this much I might expect, that as you can ſay nothing by experience for it, ſo you can ſay nothing by experience againſt it.

3. The doctrine of the church of England, on this point, is agreeable to what has been ſaid, as follows: "This is the ordinance of God, that they which be-"lieve in Chriſt, ſhould be ſaved without works, by "faith only, freely we receive remiſſion of our ſins.—— "This whoſoever denieth is not to be accounted for a "chriſtian man, nor for a ſetter forth of Chriſt's "glory, but for an adverſary to Chriſt and his goſpel." *Homily of Salvation, part* 1. *p.* 15, 16.

4. The reverend aſſembly of divines at Weſtminſter, in their definition of repentance, *Shorter Cat. queſt.* 37. ſay, it muſt ariſe from *an apprehenſion of the mercy of God in Chriſt*; and, in ſhort, all ſound Proteſtants place faith in Chriſt for the remiſſion of ſins firſt, as the cauſe,

cauſe, and true repentance as the effect; and to deviate from this, is to deviate from the good old way.

Matthew Henderſon was told in the letter *to be aſſured of his ſalvation* by a *faith of truſt and dependance on Jeſus Chriſt*, becauſe that was no more in fact, than bidding him *believe in Chriſt for ſalvation*: He that wrote it did conceive faith in Chriſt to be more than a mere believing of promiſes of good if we did well, and threatnings if we did ill: He knew from the ſcriptures and experience, that it was an *appropriating*, or *a taking Chriſt* and his ſalvation *to ourſelves* in particular, and *aſſuring ourſelves* in that way, of ſalvation by him, upon the foundation of his *being given* as a *Saviour* in the *word* of the goſpel for that purpoſe; or, in the words of the aſſemblys catechiſm, "A receiving "and reſting upon Chriſt alone for ſalvation, as he is "freely offered to us in the goſpel."

Another reaſon why he told him to be *aſſured* by faith in Chriſt of his ſalvation, was, that he knew by *experience* and *ſcripture*, that *faith* could not be *effectual* to *purify* the heart, and produce *true repentance*, but by *ſo aſſuring* us of ſalvation, and that our repentance and purity of heart, bears a *proportional* degree with the aſſurance of faith, as an *effect* from the *cauſe*; ſo that where the *aſſurance* is ſtrong, the *heart-purity* is great, and where it is weak, the *heart-purity* can be but little. Theſe things, Reverend Sir, conſidered farther, and weighed in the balance of a *candid judgment*, will take off the appearance of *ſhocking*, in what you repreſented

as

as ſuch, and convince you, that it is neceſſary to be better acquainted with a matter, before you repreſent it in your pulpit, leaſt you ſhould miſrepreſent it.

I am,

Reverend SIR,

Yours, &c.

WILLIAM CUDWORTH.

POSTSCRIPT.

AS to thoſe ſcriptures you read to be conſidered concerning crying, *Peace! Peace!* when there is no peace, I leave you to judge, whether they are more applicable to them, who bid us to truſt upon our *repentance*, and *keeping of the Commandments*, for heaven, or to them who come *preaching peace by Jeſus Chriſt?*

ADVERTISEMENT.

I Would recommend this letter to the conſideration of the Curate of Melbourn in Derbyſhire; he has been pleaſed, though very awkwardly, to introduce my name into a book he has lately publiſhed, charging it upon me, that I aſſert repentance, *i. e. goſpel* repentance, (as I term it in my writings) not to be previous unto, but an effect of faith in Chriſt. I acknowledge the charge, and ſtand ready, as the Lord ſhall enable me, to defend it, as the good old ſcriptural way and in the words of the aſſociate Preſbytery of Scotland in their act concerning the doctrine of grace, p. 17. "That it is the duty of all, upon the revelation of Chriſt "in the goſpel, and without looking for any previous "qualifications in themſelves, *inſtantly* to believe in him "for ſalvation, both from ſin and wrath; and that, in "ſo doing *only*, they will be made, in a goſpel manner, "to mourn for ſin, *forſake it*, and live unto righteouſ-"neſs; ſo that it is not *poſſible* for any man, of him-"ſelf, to forſake his ſins, or actually to exerciſe goſpel-"repentance, *until* he is determin'd and enabled by the "power of the ſpirit of faith, to look or *come* to Chriſt, "the Prince and Saviour, exalted to give repentance, "and remiſſion of ſins." And as to legal repentance, inaſmuch as it implies the abſence of faith, it is not the duty of any to ſeek to be in ſuch a ſtate; it is right for ſuch as are loſt to know their caſe as it is, but it is as much their duty to be acquainted with Chriſt, by faith in him, which prevents a legal repentance, and cauſes a goſpel one; and all this is aſſerted without any denial of the operations of the Spirit in faith, or any fruits meet for, or becoming a repentant ſtate.